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COMMISSION



EARLY CATHOLIC EXPLORERS
OF THE SOUTHWEST

BY

REV. PAUL J. FOIK, C.S.C., PH.D.
CHAIRMAN OF THE TEXAS K. OF C. HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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EARLY CATHOLIC EXPLORERS OF THE SOUTHWEST

Like an Arabian Night's tale does the story of the shipwrecked Spaniards of the ill-fated Narvaez Expedition to America unfold itself.¹ During the voyage and attempted explorations most of the party were lost. Encouraged and stimulated by the great achievements of other conquistadores and wishing to obtain fame equal to that of Cortes, Panfilo de Narvaez projected a settlement to be made in the territory bordering on the Gulf of Mexico, which had previously been discovered by Francis de Garay, Governor of the Island of Jamaica. Five vessels, containing about six hundred persons, embarked from Spain on June 17, 1527. Along with these prospective settlers came some secular priests and five Franciscan friars. The commissary of these religious was Padre Juan Xuarez. Another member who wished to exercise his religious zeal was Fray Juan de Palos, a lay brother. He was one of the original band of missionaries, the first foundation of the Franciscans in Mexico. Ac-

¹ Nuñez, Alvar (Cabeça de Vaca), *La Relacion que dio; ibid, Relacion de los Naufragios*; Purchas, *Collection* (English translation), Vol. XVIII; Smith, Buckingham, *Relation of Alvar Nunez Cabeça de Vaca* with appendix by John Gilmary Shea giving appreciation of the translator's work; Oviedo y Valdes, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. 35, chap. I-VII, pp. 582-618; Fernandez, Pedro; *La relacion y comentarios*; see also Barcia, Andres G., *Historiadores Primitivos de las Indias Occidentales*, Vol. I: Ardoino, Antonio; *Examen Apologetico*; Plautus, Caspar, *Nova Typis Transacta*; Ramusio, Giovanni B., *Navigazioni et Viaggi*, III, 310-330; Ternaux-Compans, Henri, *Voyages*, serie I, tom. VII. The above references are the chief original sources for the Narvaez Expedition. Buckingham Smith's scholarly translation in English, second edition, has been carefully followed throughout.

Besides these original sources Davis, W. H., *Spanish Conquest of New Mexico*, 20-108, is helpful because of the notes and suggestions. The chief secondary materials are: Herrera, Antonio de, *Historia General* dec. IV, lib. IV, cap. V-VI; dec. VI, lib. I, cap. III-VII; lib. IX, cap. XI; Gleeson, W., *Hist. Cath. Ch.*, I, 45-64; Simpson, J. H., *Coronado's March in Smithsonian Rept.* 1869 p. 310; Lummis, Chas. F., *Spanish Pioneers*, pp. 100-117. Bancroft H., *Hist. N. Mex. States and Texas*, 60-70; Winsor, Justin, *Narr. and Crit. Hist. of Amer.*, Vol II (two articles, one by Shea, John Gilmary, *Ancient Florida*, p. 242 et seq., the other by Haynes, Henry W., *Early Explorations of New Mexico*, p. 474 et seq.); Shea, John Gilmary; *Cath. Ch. in Col. Days*, I, 108-111.

cording to Torquemada, Padre Xuarez belonged to the province of San Gabriel, and first came to America in 1523. He was soon made guardian at the convent established at Heuxalzinco, and was regarded by the Indians of that place as a most saintly man. Just before the prospective expedition he returned to Spain and received authorization from his superiors to carry the Gospel into this new field. After many months at sea Narvaez reached Santo Domingo, where in an attempt to land some of the vessels were wrecked in a storm. Some of the members of the expedition deserted at this time so that there were only three hundred and forty-five left. More violent tempests occurred in an attempt to reach the Gulf of Mexico. The commander of the fleet tried to seek shelter in the harbor of Havana, where he expected also to lay in a fresh store of provisions for the continuation of the journey, but he found it impossible, on account of poor seamanship and the heavy sea, to make the port. The ships were driven on the coast of Florida near what is now Apalache Bay. With vessels all in a battered condition and with no food in sight, the entire colony found itself in a very sad predicament. Wandering about like lost, they travelled inland and their numbers were fast being thinned by starvation, disease, and attacks by hostile Indians. Narvaez took counsel with his men, and asked each one his opinion as to the best plan of action in this dire extremity. The decision was finally reached that they should skirt the Gulf until they arrived at some Spanish settlement in Mexico. They had gone so far astray from their forced landing place that it was almost fatal for them to retrace their steps.

Without ships and in their enfeebled condition it was impossible to travel. All agreed that new vessels should be built, but there was no one who knew sufficient to construct these boats. To add to the difficulty, there were no tools or materials at hand. Gnawing hunger with its deathlike visage haunted these haggard adventurers day by day.

In that dark, grim hour that also tried men's souls their ingenuity became productive. Necessity, then as now, gave birth to invention. Bellows, supplied with pipes made from hollowed out logs and with deer skin, soon gave life and heat to the glowing forge. Stirrups, spurs and other iron articles were gathered together, and from these materials nails, saws, axes and other tools were made. The daily rations consisted of horse flesh. Two of these animals were killed every week, to condition, re-

vive and strengthen the men who labored on the boats. This work was commenced on August 4, 1528, and completed on the twentieth of September of the same year. Palm-leaf fibre and pine tree resin were used for caulking. The ropes and riggings were supplied from the manes and tails of the horses that had been slaughtered and from their tanned hides water bottles and other containers were provided.

As soon as these five boats, each thirty-five feet long, were ready, preparations were made to continue the sea voyage. On the twenty-second of September all but one horse had been consumed. The food from that day on consisted of a little raw maize. Each boat carried about fifty men and in one of these vessels Narvaez, Father Xuarez and his companions embarked. The whole party followed the Gulf coast, keeping it constantly in sight; but in spite of this precaution they were whipped and driven by terrible storms and were at the mercy of the waves.

About dawn on the sixth of November, Cabeza de Vaca, who was in charge of one of the boats, was aroused by the breaking of the surf and communicated with Narvaez about the nearness of the land. After a sounding had been taken, the boat was found to be in seven fathoms of water. Advice was given by the commander of the fleet that all should keep to sea until sunrise, but a huge wave threw De Vaca's boat violently out of the water and all the people, half-naked and half dead from cold and hunger, were aroused from their state of coma and began to crawl on hands and knees from the boat to the dry land.

The boats of Narvaez and the missionaries continued on, but the seamen who worked at the oars and sails were unskilled, and the clumsy vessels capsized with all on board. Of the clergy, only Father Asturiano escaped a watery grave, but he did not long survive his brethren. Of the gallant and fearless host, which gayly sailed away from Spain in the middle of June, 1527, only eighty now remained. These were soon reduced by famine, exposure and pestilence to fifteen, and were scattered among the Indian tribes as slaves. The place where this third shipwreck occurred was called Malhado Island or Island of Misfortune. According to some authorities Galveston is about the location where these disasters happened and where the few survivors came ashore.

Cabeza de Vaca remained on the island over a year, subject to the harshest treatment and the most painful servitude. From these arduous labors he finally escaped to the mainland. Here

he met Oviedo, another member of the ill-fated expedition and both went down the coast to the bay called Espiritu Santo, which had been noted by the earlier coastal explorers Garay and Piñeda in 1519. Oviedo returned to Malhado, but Cabeza de Vaca became a slave again in another tribe. He soon fell in with the other few survivors of the wrecked party, Andres Dorantes, Alonso de Castillo Maldonado and Estevanico, an Arabian negro, who was destined to play an important part in other exploring parties in the Southwest.

The wanderings of this group, northwestward through Texas, were directed towards the San Saba mountains, and they then proceeded due west, covering the area between that point and California. This was the first party of overland travellers in what is now the southern part of the United States.

In his own humble way De Vaca instructed the natives in the doctrines of Christianity and in the performance of good works. He was frequently called upon to heal the sick. At first he hesitated to invoke the Divine Power; but when the Indians urged him, and placed those afflicted with painful maladies and diseases before him, he was filled with confidence in God, who had been his Protector on so many recent occasions. He was fortunate enough to succeed in his first attempts. His method of curing their distress was by the laying on of hands and by the prayers of Holy Church. That these alleviations of suffering were due to supernatural interposition were the beliefs and the convictions of both the Spaniards and the Indians. The fame of the miracle man spread far and wide, and his presence was requested by many tribes. "Whatever may have been the cause of their success," says Bancroft, speaking of these wanderers in the wilderness, "it satisfactorily accounts for the safety with which they made the trip. They were received with uniform kindness by every tribe, supplied always with the best the natives had, besieged at every town with petitions for a longer stay and exercise of their healing powers, and finally escorted to the next people on the way often by thousands of attendants."

For six years or more Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca and his companions wandered naked among the many hostile and barbarous tribes, from Florida to the Pacific Coast, enduring all the hardships of exposure and enslavement forced on them by the savages with whom they came in contact. Finally, they reached Culiacan in Sinoloa on May 1, 1536, where De Vaca related their harrowing experiences.

The news of these great discoveries in the northern wilderness spread like wild-fire. The glowing descriptions regarding wonderful places and many strange people who inhabited them were related to Antonio de Mendoza, the Viceroy of New Spain, who in turn gave the good tidings to Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, his close friend and advisor. He had recently been appointed by the Viceroy Governor of Nueva Galicia. Other eager and adventurous explorers and zealous missionaries were not lacking, who offered their services. Coronado repaired immediately to investigate still further the reports of discoveries made. He summoned to his presence three Franciscan friars and the negro Estevanico, whom he employed as guide because of his previous experience with De Vaca. He selected from the monks, Fray Marcos de Niza, because he had a knowledge of exploration, acquired under Alvarado in Peru, and because of his character and other attainments for he was one of the higher superiors of the Franciscan order in Mexico. The missionary next repaired to Mendoza, who gave him further instructions. He was ordered to make a preliminary journey, and to prepare the way for permanent occupation and settlement of the country.² As a result Fray Marcos de Niza obtained the permission of his superiors to preach the Gospel to the natives, and, moreover, received instructions from the Viceroy to penetrate still further into the land of mystery, where no white man had ever trodden. "If God, Our Lord, pleases," he said, "that you find any large town, where it seems to you that there is good opportunity for establishing a convent, and of sending religious to be employed in conversion, you are to advise me by Indians or to return in person to Culiacan. With all secrecy you are to give notice, that preparation be made without delay, because the service of our Lord and the good of the people of the land is the aim of the pacification of whatever is discovered." Padre Marcos took Estevanico, the negro, with him as a guide, for the latter had

² Niza, Marcos de, *Descubrimiento de las Siete Ciudades* in Pacheco, *Documentos ineditos*, tom. III, 325-350; Ramusio, Giovanni B., *Navigazioni*, vol. III, 354-59; Hakluyt, Richard, *Divers Voyages*, vol. III, 438; Ternaux-Compans, Henri, *Voyages*, Serie I, Tom IX, pp. 256-84, 287-90, 349-54; Herrera, Antonio de, dec. VI, Lib. VII, cap. VIII *Historia General*; Davis, W. H., *Span. Conq. N. Mex.*, 114-31; Engelhardt, Zephyrin, *The Franciscans in Arizona*, Chap. I; Bandelier, A. F., *Contributions to the History of the Southwest*; Salpointe, *Soldiers of the Cross*; Arricivita, *Chronica Seraphica*, prologo; Winship, G. P., *14th Annual Rpt. Bur. Ethnol*; Lummis, Chas. F., *Span. Pioneers*; Twitchell, R. E., *Leading facts of New Mexican History*; *ibid*, *Span. Archives N. Mex.*; Shea, J. Gilmary, *Cath. Ch. in Colonial days*, Vol. I, p. 115; Baneroff, H. H., *The North Mex. States*, 75-77; Whipple, A. W., *Rpt. Explor. Railroad*.

travelled with Cabeza de Vaca from the Gulf to the Pacific Coast. The missionary was asked to make a reconnaissance of the country through which he travelled. He was told to observe particularly the physical features, number of rivers, fertility of the soil and the minerals and precious stones. Specimens of these metals were to be gathered, reports made of the routes followed, and places visited. Finally, he was to take possession of the new country in the name of the king.

Fray Marcos gave definite information of the explorations he made. He was but three days on his journey when Fray Honoratus, his travelling companion, took sick and was left behind. He travelled for four days through the hot desert and came to a people who had no knowledge whatever of Europeans. They regarded the Franciscan in his brown religious habit as a "man sent from heaven" and in deep reverence they endeavored to touch his garment. The missionary tried to instruct them about "God in heaven and His Majesty upon earth."

It was among this tribe that Fray Marcos first heard about the seven cities of Cibola. He then travelled on for three days until he reached Vacapa, where he rested for a long time, while Estevanico accompanied by over three hundred members of the party, mostly Indians, was set in search of this region, that was described as "a country, the finest in the world."

After several days' journey, one of the cities had been reached, and a messenger was despatched back to Vacapa to inform Fray Marcos of the discovery. Three Indians also, with their faces, hands and breasts painted, came on that same day and confirmed the reports that had been made in regard to that country. Other messengers soon arrived from Estevanico, urging Fray Marcos to hasten his departure from Vacapa. As they proceeded on their way, as an escort to the missionary, they told of other great kingdoms called Marata, Acus and Totontenac. They spoke of people with finely woven cotton garments, and mantles made of skins, as well tanned as those in the most civilized countries in Europe. He journeyed on, passing through villages, in which he was kindly received, and where they brought sick people to him to be cured. He generally recited the Gospels over them. The territory that he next entered was the finest he had seen in his whole journey. He therefore took formal possession of it in the name of the king, according to instructions given by the Viceroy, and erected two crosses to mark the spot as one most desirable for later settlement.

After crossing a rich fertile valley at about 35° north latitude, a country more thickly populated, for there were hamlets almost every half league, he halted at the edge of the desert to rest for a short time. He had heard that Estevanico had passed on several days before, well provisioned, and he himself had been urged to pursue a similar course. For almost a fortnight he continued his toilsome and weary march, resting in the cabins that had recently been occupied by the negro and his escort. As Marcos and his select group trudged along the trackless waste, an Indian became visible in the distance. As he drew near, he was found to be covered with dust and sweat. Grief and terror were deeply stamped in every line of his face and mouth. He related the story of Estevanico's approach to the most famous of cities, where the chief ruler lived; how he delivered his staff of office to him as a signification of his peaceful intentions; how the governor angrily rejected this token of friendship, and threatened the entire exploration party with death should they dare to enter the city. Hungry, thirsty and fatigued, they rested near the bank of a river, but the people of Cibola attacked them, and slew nearly all the companions of the negro guide. He hid himself behind some rocks and for a while managed to avoid capture. Finally, he took to flight pursued by the people of Cibola, who caught and imprisoned him and afterwards put him to death. Estevanico, contrary to the orders of his superior, Fray Marcos, had attempted to enter the first city of Cibola, and paid the price for his disobedience.

The padre, when he heard of the misfortune that had come to the negro guide and so many other members of his expedition, was very much concerned. He trembled with fear and indignation. He was very much troubled that the ill-regulated ambition of Estevanico to reach these seven cities would also bring about his own failure to achieve his set purpose; and the thought that he would be compelled to return to Mexico without the desired information about these strange peoples and their abodes in the midst of the wilderness almost filled him with despair. This predicament was intensified by the wailings of the Indians as they heard the pitiful story.

In this agitation of mind he journeyed on, at the same time consoling his companions. Some had even threatened to desert him. He tried to placate them with presents. Here indeed was his Gethsemani. He withdrew at a short distance, fell on his

knees and prayed for an hour and a half, asking God's protection and guidance. In that bitter agony, the Indians acting as his escorts plotted the Father's death. He arose from the ground comforted, ready to meet the situation, and determined by the will of God to reach his destination should he be spared. When within a day's journey of Cibola, Fray Marcos met two more of Estevanico's Indian companions. They showed the wounds they had received from arrows and told again the story of death and destruction that had practically wiped out this advance guard of the expedition.

But the Franciscan friar was not daunted by these perils that surrounded him. His own followers noted his determination and he even persuaded two chieftains to accompany him to an elevation where he could view the marvellous city. He beheld a pueblo, "situated in a plain at the foot of a round hill, and that makes show to be a fair city." The houses "were built in order and made of stone with divers stories and flat roofs." Fray Marcos planted a cross in the centre of a heap of stones near at hand, took possession of the entire region in the name of the king, and called the country, *El Nuevo Reino de San Francisco*, The New Kingdom of St. Francis.

The journey of the friar back across the desert was sorrowful. The Indians who had acted as escorts and interpreters and had sacrificed their lives were mourned by their relatives. The padre was held indirectly responsible because he was leader of the expedition. His reception among these various tribes so alarmed him that he hastened his steps. In a short space of time he was at Compostella, where he found Coronado and also immediately informed the Viceroy of his return.

The fascinating report of Alvar Nuñez and the marvellous story of Fray Marcos de Niza kindled the enthusiasm of all Spanish adventurers to fever heat. Cortes, who had aspirations for northern explorations, became alarmed at the rivalry for fame and wealth that the new discoveries had created, fitted out a fleet, and placed Francisco de Ulloa in command. By this means he hoped to get the start of his chief competitors, but the expedition terminated disastrously.

In the meantime, Coronado was not idle. He despatched Melchor Diaz and Juan de Zandivar to verify the report made by Niza to the Viceroy. He, himself, also hastened to the capital, where Mendoza approved the entire scheme of conquest and

encouraged it by his own influence and authority.³ The glowing accounts of the friars were broadcasted everywhere. These marvellous tales, in some instances, were purposely exaggerated so as to attract members. Three hundred Spaniards, mostly men of the highest rank and best families, enlisted. To this group were added eight hundred Indians.

Fray Marcos de Niza had meanwhile been reappointed the Provincial of the Franciscan Province of the Holy Gospel and he used all the powers of his office to further the entrada, which he hoped would eventually lead to permanent settlement. Here the holy zeal of the sons of St. Francis could be exercised for the conversion of souls and the civilization of the barbarous native tribes. The pulpits everywhere rang with the startling announcement of this glorious crusade. In fact Fray Marcos

³ Pacheco, *Documentos ineditos*, tom. XIX p. 318 et seq. contains *Relacion del suceso de la jornada que Francisco Vasquez hizo en el descubrimiento de Cibola*. See also Buckingham Smith's *Coleccion de varios documentos; Traslado de las nuevas y noticias . . . de Cibola* in Pacheco, *Doc. ined.*, tom. XIX, p. 304 et seq. See also Buckingham Smith's *Coleccion*, p. 155 et seq. Ternaux-Compans, Henri (ed.), *Relation du Voyage de Cibola enterpris in 1540*; Castaneda, Pedro de, *Relation de Voyage de Cibola* in Ternaux-Compans, *Voyages*, 1st ser. tom. IX; Hakluyt, Richard, *Voyages*, III; Ramusio, *Navigations*, III, p. 395 et seq. contain report transmitted to Viceroy Mendoza from Cibola, entitled: *Relatione de Francisco Vasquez de Coronado del viaggio alle dette setta cita* (See Hakluyt's *Voyages*, VII, p. 446 for English translation.) The Quivira Relation of Coronado in Pacheco, *Doc. ined.*, tom. III, p. 363; French trans. in Ternaux-Compans, Henri, *Voyages*, IX. p. 355 et seq. Emory, Wm. H., *Notes of a Military Reconnaissance*; Gallatin, Albert, *Ancient Semi-civilization of N. Mex.* in the *Transactions Amer. Ethnol. Soc.* Vol. II, p. liii; Bandelier, A. F.; *Hist. Intro. to Studies among the Sedentary Ind. of N. Mex.* (*Papers of the Archeol. Inst. of Amer.*, Amer. Ser. No. 1, 1881), *ibid.*, *Contributions to Hist. of the Southwest*; Squier, E. G., *New Mex. and Cal. Ancient Monuments, etc.*, in *Amer. Rev.*, Nov., 1848; Simpson, J. H., *Journal of a Military Reconnaissance from Santa Fe to the Navajo Country*, in *Senate Exec. Doc. No. 64*, 31st Congress, 1st Session, 1850; *ibid.*, *Coronado's March in search of the Seven Cities of Cibola* in *Annual Rpt. Smithsonian Inst.* 1869. See also *Journal of Amer. Geograph. Soc.*, Vol. V, p. 194, and *Geograph. Magazine*, Vol. I, p. 86; Winship, George Parker *The Coronado Expedition in Fourteenth Annual Rpt. Bur. Ethnol.*, Part 1, pp. 329-637 (1896); Donoghue, David, *Route of the Coronado Expedition in Texas* (With Map) in *Southwestern Hist. Quart.*, XXXII, pp. 181-192. (Takes issue with findings of both Simpson and Winship); Whipple, A. W. and Turner, W. W., *Pacific Railroad Rpts*, III; Breckenridge, H. M., *Early discoveries by Spaniards in New Mex.*, Davis W. H. H., *El Gringo*; *ibid.*, *Span. Conquest of N. Mex.*; Twitchell, R. E., *Leading Facts of N. Mex. Hist*; *ibid.*, *Span. Archives of N. Mex.*; Bancroft, H. H., *Works especially North Mex. States*, Vol. I pp. 27, 71-76, 82-87; *New Mex. and Arizona*; Shea, John Gilmary, *Cath. Ch. in Colonial Days*; *ibid.*, *Hist. of the Cath. Missions among the Indian Tribes*; *ibid.*, *American Martyrology* (unpublished work in MS. in Cath. Archives of Amer. at Notre Dame Univ.); Hale, E. E., *Coronado's Discovery of the Seven Cities in Amer. Anti. Soc. Proc.*, Oct. 1877 and Oct. 1878; Haynes, Henry W., *What is the True Site of the Seven Cities of Cibola* in the *Proceedings of the same Society*, 1878; *ibid.*, *Early Explorations of N. Mex.*, cited above; Prince, L. Bradford, *Hist. Sketches of N. Mex.*

again set out with the Coronado expedition along with Fray Juan Padilla, Fray Juan de la Cruz and Fray Luis de Escalona, but his health was broken, and he returned in the fall of 1540 shortly after Coronado had reached Zuni in New Mexico. The trials and hardships of his first journey brought on paralysis, from which he never fully recovered. In spite of this infirmity he lived until the year 1558. According to the Chronicle of Xalisco he was revered by all as "most saintly," and his brethren esteemed him as "a very learned and religious man."

Coronado, when he reached Cibola, was greatly disappointed with what he saw. While there, some Indians came from Cicuye, seventy leagues east, and gave him descriptions of their own country. Here was found a pueblo with houses four stories high. The party was escorted into the town with great signs of joy amid the sounds of fife and drum.

Juan Jaramillo, one of the captains of the Coronado expedition, states in his *Relacion*, that he left at this place with Fray de Escalona, a slave boy named Cristobal, a Tarascan named Andres, and two negroes. These same later reported that this lay brother was killed by the older men of the place, who hated him because of his religious influence in that neighborhood.

Fray Juan Padilla, the youngest of the group of missionaries, has the distinction, however, of being the first martyr within the limits of what is now the United States. The record of Fray Juan Padilla, as a wanderer in the wilderness, is worthy of note. He travelled with Coronado to Cibola; he journeyed with Pedro de Tobar to Moqui; he then returned to Zuni; he joined Hernando de Alvarado on a thousand mile trip over vast deserts and he accompanied Coronado on his search for the mythical Quivira. Rueben Gold Thwaites thus speaks of this latter expedition:

"Disappointed, but still hoping to find the country of gold, Coronado's gallant little army, frequently thinned by death and desertion, for three years beat up and down the southwestern wilderness, now thirsting in the deserts, now penned up in gloomy cañons, now crawling over pathless mountains, suffering the horrors of starvation and of despair, but following this will o' the wisp with melancholy perseverance seldom seen in man save when searching for some mysterious treasure. 'Through mighty plains and sandy heaths,' says the chronicler of the expedition, 'smooth and wearisome and bare of wood, they travelled. All the way the plains are as full of crook-back oxen (buffaloes) as the mountain Serena in Spain is of sheep. They were a great succor for the hunger and want of bread which our people stood in. One day it rained in that plain a great shower of hail as big as oranges which caused many tears,

weakness and vows . . . Cooperating parties explored the upper valley of the Rio Grande and Gila, ascended the Colorado for two hundred and forty miles above its mouth and visited the Grand Cañon of the same river. Coronado at last returned, satisfied that he had been victimized by the idle tales of travelers. He was rewarded with contumely, and lost his place as governor of New Galicia, but the romantic march stands in history as one of the most remarkable expeditions of modern times."

Father Juan Padilla returned with Coronado from the land of the Quivirans. Unlike the other members, who were mounted, the humble padre trudged along on foot all the way back to Bernalillo. Here the missionaries resolved to devote their lives for the conversion of the Indian tribes to Christianity. Fray Juan de la Cruz had already entered upon his labors among the Pueblos. When Coronado returned to the South the padres remained in New Mexico and all merited crowns of martyrdom. Fray Padilla chose to labor among the Quiviran Indians. With him remained Andres Docampo, a soldier, Lucas and Sebastian, called Donados, and a few Mexican Indian boys. This little band plodded its way on foot back over the vast plains. At last after much wearisome travel they reached the village where Coronado had planted a large cross and here Fray Juan Padilla established his mission. His influence with the savages soon prepared their minds and hearts for the Word of God and these roving children of the prairies loved him as a father. The burning zeal of Fray Juan Padilla led him to attempt the conversion of other neighboring hostile tribes. The Quivirans had become so attached to the kind padre that they were loath to lose his religious ministrations. They also resented the action of the missionary because their bitter enemies were about to derive the benefit. But Fray Padilla was determined to go. After about one day's journey, the padre and his companions met a band of Indians on the warpath. He wished to secure the safety of everyone but himself. He had yearned for this day, which was to obtain for him a martyr's crown.

The approach of the galloping, dusty horde left but little time for action. Docampo, the soldier, still possessed his horse. The two Donados and the Mexican Indians were fleet runners.

"Flee my children," cried Fray Padilla, "Save yourselves, for me ye cannot help and why should all die together. Run!"

There was a moment of indecision. But as the padre pleaded with them again, they seemed to read the thoughts of his

heart and made good their escape. A scene was about to be enacted, where one of God's heroes was to make the supreme sacrifice of his life. Here amid these lonely surroundings was shed the blood of the proto-martyr of the United States.

Fray Padilla dropped on his knees and offered his soul to God and as he prayed the Indians pierced him from head to foot with many arrows. This new triumph of Christianity was carried back to the world by his fleeing companions. They too had many tribulations and hardships. For ten months they were compelled to live as slaves, beaten and starved almost to death. Finally, after many unsuccessful attempts they escaped from the cruel servitude of these barbarians. Amid the most terrible privations and dangers they wandered footsore and forlorn for eight long years. They zigzagged across the burning hot sands of the desert for thousands and thousands of miles, and finally found their way to Tampico, where they had been given up as lost or killed by savages. They returned, weary and broken, but they had accomplished their purpose. They brought back to civilization the glorious story of the martyrdom of Padre Juan Padilla, the proto-martyr of the United States.

Language can hardly overstate the pain, the anguish, and even despair, that must have tried the bodies and souls of these early explorers. "Cabeza de Vaca," says Lummis, "was the first to penetrate the then 'Dark Continent' of North America, as he was, by centuries, the first to cross the continent. His nine years of wandering on foot, unarmed, naked, starving among wild beasts and wilder men, with no other attendants than three as ill-fated comrades, gave the world the first glimpse of the United States inland, and led to some of the most stirring and important achievements connected with its early history. Nearly a century before the Pilgrim Fathers planted their noble commonwealth on the edge of Massachusetts, seventy-five years before the first English Settlement was made in the New World, and more than a generation before there was a single Caucasian settler of *any* blood within the area of the present United States, Vaca and his giant followers had trudged across this unknown land."

Again, speaking of Fray Marcos de Niza, John Gilmary Shea says: "He stands in history as the earliest of the priestly explorers, who unarmed and on foot penetrated into the heart of the country; . . . a barefooted friar effecting more, as

Viceroy Mendoza wrote, than well armed parties of Spaniards had been able to accomplish, and who more than three centuries and a half ago (now four) initiated a mission of the Franciscan Order which was for years to spread Christian light over the interior of the continent, long before the advance guard of Protestantism appeared in either Virginia or Massachusetts. Fray Marcos opened the way, but the mission was not effectively begun till many zealous Franciscans had laid down their lives in the attempt to win the natives to listen to the Christian doctrine of which he was the herald."

Of the expedition of Coronado, General Simpson states "For extent in distance travelled, duration of time and multiplicity of its co-operating expeditions, it equalled if it did not exceed any land expedition in modern times." The Southwest, where all this took place, contains hundreds of thousands of square miles. That country was then a vast wilderness, the cruelest wilderness conceivable. These early pioneers really took their lives in their hands. Thirst, starvation, savagery in a roadless desert! Even today, in certain parts of this great territory, the traveller looks off into endless space and sees but sandy wastelands and barren mountain peaks. Even today, to venture out on the lonely areas of New Mexico and Arizona is perilous and forbidding. But what was the situation four centuries ago for the explorer? "A journey from somewhere through the unknown to nowhere; whose starting, course, and end are all untrodden and unguessed wilds," with hardships, dangers of attacks from savage Indians and endurance added for full measure. Fortitude, bravery, heroism were necessary in that Dark Land of Mystery.

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